



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# The Workshop

A Monthly Journal, devoted to Progress of the Useful Arts

EDITED BY

PROF. W. BAUMER, I. SCHNORR AND OTHERS.

VOL. III.

NO. 4.

## COMPARATIVE VIEW OF ART-INDUSTRY PRODUCTIONS OF THE PRESENT DAY.\*

By J. FALKE.

We regret that we can devote but comparatively few words to the subject of Bronzes, which offer a wide field for discussion. In the Renaissance period, Italy, as once Greece in ancient times, had applied itself with the greatest intensity to this noble material, and reigned so supreme in this branch of art, that whatever was at the same time produced elsewhere, as in Nuremberg and Augsburg, seems in comparison quite an isolated or exceptional creation. At present France stands in the same relation towards the other nations of civilised Europe. Apart from monumental bronzes, no other productions can compete with the French, either in number, or in the richness and range of the subjects, and in the variety and finish of workmanship. From this point of view, the French bronze department of the last Paris Exhibition displayed a wonderful superiority.

French industry and bronzes have this in common, that both are especially adapted for articles of luxury. In everything indeed which appertains to mere luxury France has no equal, and all bronze works, even those which are destined for common use, partake of this character. For this reason, in the French bronzes figures have an important place, either singly, or in groups, or in combination with objects which serve really or ostensibly for use. These single figures and groups belong indeed to high art, and are not unfrequently the creations of eminent artists, but both on account of their merely decorative purpose as chamber-ornaments and of their

original character as being intended for reproduction, they belong to that department of Art-Industry which, by its artistic features ranks next to high art. A great part of this kind of bronze-work consists of imitations in miniature of the most celebrated productions of Antiquity, the Renaissance, and Modern times; but a still greater part is independent of mere copying, showing original creations for the decorative purposes of Art-Industry. These bear essentially the genuine stamp of their origin, being for the most part light and pleasing, but affecting the *genre* or every day life in subject and treatment. The versatility and especially the capricious play of French fancy find in them a desirable sphere.

Figures of this character form the principal feature for those objects also which serve for use as well as luxury. To this category belong candelabra, candlesticks of all kinds, girandoles, lamps and above all clocks. Candelabra are seen with all kinds of figures of life size; Indians, Negroes, Negresses, carrying their jets of flame or candle holders on their heads or in their hands. The same thing is seen on a small scale with table-standards and ornamental candlesticks; clocks especially, as is well known, offer a free field for the exhibition of all sorts of figures and groups of this light character, the ideas of which stand in no connexion whatever with the object they serve to adorn, or even for the most part with its elementary form.

But here lies artistically the weak point of the French bronze manufactory. All these objects are deli-

\* See *ante*, p. 33.

cately designed, and for the most part, in point of the treatment of the material, admirably executed. The French understand how to give their bronzes many different kinds of excellent shades of color, and thus to attain even a pictorial in addition to the plastic effect; the surface also is frequently chiselled, and treated with such a refinement that even the epidermis of the figure seems imitated with microscopic exactitude. But in the construction of the whole, they fail in structural repose, in the perfection of outline, and in rich and harmonious ornamentation. The difference will easily be perceived by comparing the beautiful bronze candelabra of the Renaissance, and still more of the Antique, with a modern French one.

This defect is the more apparent in proportion as the object requires a purely ornamental and conventional treatment, and by its purpose and structure does not allow, or at least not invite to the introduction of figures; such for example as chandeliers and fire-irons. We miss in these the clearness of composition, the boldness of outline, the noble simplicity of general form in perfect harmony with the fashion of the several parts, and instead of these we find rococo-like contorted lines, a baroque construction, and frequently such an overloading of foliage that a chandelier not unfrequently presents the idea of a forest instead of a work of art.

It is precisely in this last respect that we acknowledge the excellence of the English bronze manufactures as aiming not at any fantastic, but at a rational and really artistic execution. They are confined however to all kinds of household articles of general, but not too common use, and do not attempt mere ornament or decoration. Hence it follows that the English bronze manufactures cannot compete with the French either in the extent of range or in technical variety. The same may be said of the Austrian productions, especially of those of Vienna which come next in rank, but which in their artistic conception are not unfrequently to be preferred to the English. Here also the figurative character is either entirely wanting, or appears only incidentally added to the ornamental. Rich, noble forms designed by real artists, chiefly in the style of the Renaissance, constitute the principal features of all such articles as serve either for luxury or use; to these may be added, as worthy of mention, smaller articles for the writing table and domestic use, only that in these what is really good and artistic, is mixed with forms that are perverted, out of all taste and absurd, illustrating the conflict between the old and new taste which counterbalance one another. Then as another place where bronze manufactures exist we have to mention Berlin, which produces numerous and frequently excellent and successful works in the Anglo-Austrian direction, i. e., in useful domestic articles of the richer and more artistic kind, tho' for the most part poor and hard in style. Italy also, which once was at the head of bronze manufactures does not come much under notice, except for imitations or forgeries of Antique or Renaissance workmanship.

With bronze works are connected those in brass, which once in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and especially in the North and in Holland played a by no means unimportant part in Art-Industry, but afterwards disappeared from the higher sphere before its nobler rival. The French have also again taken up this material in a remarkable manner, adopting at the same time the old chandelier-forms of the Renaissance and Louis XIV periods, and other articles of the same time, attempting besides compositions from the simplest productions to vessels of state and groups of figures in relief. The numerous works of this kind which were exhibited by Lerolle in 1867. were in the highest degree worthy of notice, and many of them masterpieces of form and treatment. England has also equally revived brass-work but with different treatment and decoration, using it chiefly (Hart and son and others), but not exclusively for Church-furniture, Candlesticks, Lustres, Censers, Lecterns etc. It is cast and polished, and instead of the relief decoration of Lerolle, which we for our part prefer, displays incised ornaments filled in with colored lac, or cold enamel, often of excellent effect.

Aluminium also has been tried by the French for all sorts of articles, either white as silver, oxydised, or like brass, yellow through some composition. This metal is remarkable for its lightness, which is sometimes an advantage, but as it is at present much too dear and without any formal originality, it is only as an experiment that it possesses any interest.

According to the opinion expressed above, that the more any branch of Art-Industry is a mere matter of luxury and subject to fashion, the more dependent it is on French taste, Gold and Silver work, and their peculiar ornaments must be especially in this position, and this has been so hitherto. Still just in the point of ornament for the person, many places have preserved their national peculiarities, which are now beginning to gain a more general and increased importance for the productions of Art-Industry. This is the case, above all, with Filigree work, the most elaborate and delicate, and in certain cases the most difficult way in which these noble metals can be used as ornaments. The fashionable style of gold and silver work of our century had become altogether unartistic and ponderous, incapable therefore of making any use of the filigree which has been given up and forgotten. It has however, much to the shame of our modern feeling for Art, kept its place as a popular ornament, even among the uncivilised. In Africa, Sudan, Turkey, Greece, Sweden and Norway it is still in use, but may be seen at its best in Italy, Genoa and the remote mountainlands from whence it again returned into modern use. The forms too of the national ornaments of the Italians are full of importance, and will have a renovating effect on modern Art.

Nowhere however was there more need of this than in the Goldsmith's art. If we look upon it as the noblest branch of Art-Industry, it had sunk to the very lowest depths under the influence of French taste, which

in its extravagance had given up all pretensions to purity of form and any delicate, really artistic treatment, and seems to have looked upon the smooth bright metal itself as the only thing of value in the eyes of fashion; hence it proceeded to give to bracelets, earrings, brooches and rings a brightly polished surface which puritanically rejected all engraving, relief, or colored enamel. The demands of Art were supposed to be satisfied with the poorest and most absurd style of ornamentation, e. g., a strap or a ribbon with a clasp, encircling the object to be adorned; in the centre a stone was invariably set, or a group of stones in a setting which was as ordinary as possible. Such was the character of our fashionable ornaments; which were produced in the innumerable workshops of Paris and other countries, fettered within such narrow limits that no scope was given for the display of artistic imagination.

Reform at last came, but this time not from England, which we have already frequently had to acknowledge as the originator of reform, but from Italy. A goldsmith of Rome, the old Fortunati Pio Castellani who had begun his business with imitations of the French and English goods, found at last this method too tedious. He was acquainted with the Ancient Tuscan and Græco-Italian ornamental works; he had often had to restore them, and he saw what an immense and entire difference there was between those works and modern ornaments in their composition, harmony of conception and style, in delicacy of ornamentation as well as in delicacy and boldness of treatment. Thus the idea struck him to reproduce this ancient art and as far as possible to regenerate the modern goldsmith's craft. The task however was a doubtful one for a man with only his means, and with assistants accustomed to mere servile, mechanical work. He did not understand how to proceed in order to bring out the delicacy of the grain, or to master other difficulties. Assisted by his sons Alessandro and Augustus, he devoted himself for ten years to renewed experiments, and to the study of the writings of the ancients on the subject, until he at last fairly succeeded. This he did by bringing from the remotest corners of the Italian mountains workmen for the national ornament.

In truth it is from these efforts that any reform commenced. The workmen of Castellani have made an extraordinary and wonderful sensation both in Rome and at the Exhibitions. They have introduced the antique gold ornament into France, which assisted by the Campana collection brought it into general fashion. These *néogrec* ornamental works are far behind the ancient productions of this kind in consequence of their fantastic and servile mechanical execution, still they are a grand step in advance in comparison to anything we formerly had. Nor, when once the path of innovation had been entered upon, were the old works only adhered to as models. The Castellanis had by their experiments and imitations exhausted all the genuine styles of art, even to that of Benvenuto Cellini, and were therefore obliged

to attempt the revival of other technical characteristics, such for example, as several kinds of enamel. Such has been also the case with the other branches of the Goldsmith's art, thereby exhibiting an incongruity and confusion of style still more heightened by the imitations of the oriental ornamentation. It is, in fact, a period of transition out of which some light will, in time, proceed. In this condition, France keeps the lead as she has always done, and so if we leave Italy out of the question, there is nowhere displayed any original taste. The Swiss goldsmiths, those of Geneva especially, do indeed maintain a certain independence, their specialty being the manufacture of watches, without however being marked by any original artistic style.

A greater degree of independent style is naturally seen in the larger works of art which are submitted to the goldsmith's skill. It is true that the usual silver articles for the teatable and dining room still adhere all the same, to a certain fashion, which up to the present moment has been generally subjected to the rococo style, or paid homage to servile naturalism. But in this department also, there is again a tendency to pay more attention to the beauty of form, prompted no doubt by the contemplation of the antique bronzes, though there is as yet no great success, nor indeed is any to be expected so speedily, since the different manner of their very employment, causes by no means a slight difference between the old and new forms. What has been as yet produced of this kind whether at Paris or London, or even at S. Petersburg is much of the same stamp. But whenever any special tasks are proposed, such as table ornaments or decorations for Royal festivals or presents, in the form of shields, goblets, epergnes, centre-pieces, etc., then the dominating local schools of plastic art or the individuality of the modeller or designer are wont to be distinguished. In works of this kind the compositions emanating from London, Paris, Berlin and Munich, shew a great diversity of style, while in Vienna nothing has been produced for the last ten years which can boast any prominent or peculiar characteristic. The London specimens, especially the racing-prizes, have still kept very much to the naturalistic style, some have evident signs of the co-operation of French workmen; the French are all marked by the well known characteristics which we have already described as peculiar to them, while Berlin, which for the most part is in direct contrast with France, distinguishes itself by conscientious sculptors' and modellers' work in miniature, but without the freedom and picturesqueness which the goldsmith has at his disposition with gilding and enamel. The Munich school, inclining to the romantic, holds a middle position between France and Berlin.

In opposition to these works, Vienna possesses one specialty which must be thoroughly worked out to the general taste if the goldsmith's art is to be brought back to what it once was in richness and perfection. We speak of the too little known productions of Ratzesdorfer, free imitations of the vessels of the Renaissance, of the

sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, which by the combination of silver, gold, and gilding, precious and especially semi-precious stones of large size, as well as polished and engraved crystals, opaque and translucent enamels wrought in ornamental and most delicate shapes, constitute truly charming and harmonious works of art. Here is a path which must be pursued, one for which all cabinets of art offer the most beautiful specimens, and which we are pleased to see entered upon by others both at Paris and Vienna. We find another specialty in the Rhine provinces, in Cologne, Aix la Chapelle and other towns, namely ecclesiastical vessels of mediæval style, and Belgium and Vienna have now begun to attempt them. These objects are also enlivened by enamel and works of *niello*.

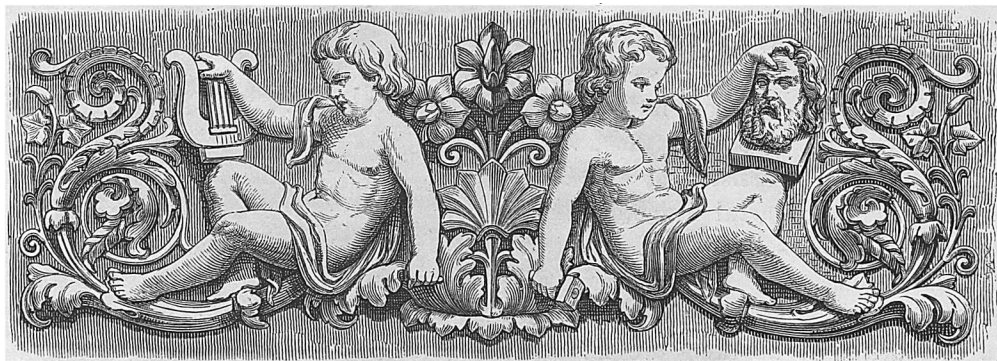
If the kinds of enamel which are here brought into application are yet but too sparingly adopted, there are other sorts which already promise a grand expansion and which we may connect with our review of metal work. Unless we are mistaken, it was Barbedienne who at Paris first introduced in great perfection the late Limoges enamel of the sixteenth century. His productions of this kind, which found several followers, are now surpassed in delicacy of execution by Lepec who instead of copper uses gold as his substratum. But these enamels are too tender and sensitive to be fit for use of any sort, so that a second kind which was principally called into existence by Barbedienne, seems to have more important consequences. The impulse was given by the old Chinese *cloisonné* which was brought into Europe in great quantities after the conquest of Peking, and on the other hand by the early Limoges or *champlevé* work, which had been preserved by ecclesiastical use. The imitations of the French and English bronze manufacturers of the

present day are but a combination of the two kinds; in appearance for the most part like the *cloisonné* enamel, and even falsely called by its name, they differ from it in this respect, that the cavities, as in the *champlevé* work, are chased out of the metal, over which a mould is formed, and any number of casts taken, the deep parts of which are filled with enamel. Works of this kind for ecclesiastical and domestic use are already very numerous, such as crucifixes, censers, vases, basins, lamps, candlesticks, etc. They are very elegant in appearance, richer in color than the early Limoges enamel, but very inferior to that of the ancient Chinese in grace and harmony. The genuine Byzantine filigree or gold *cloisonné* has not hitherto found any imitations, if we except those in miniature by Castellani.

On the other hand, there has arisen in Vienna, an independent kind of enamelling equally resembling the *cloisonné*, but with this peculiarity that the cavities are beaten into the copper by brass stamps. Great use has also been made of enamel in novel methods in the bronze ornaments of the New Opera House at Vienna. Lastly, and indeed only very lately, Ravené and Sussmann in Berlin have begun to adorn such bronze articles as plates, candlesticks, looking-glass-frames etc., with enamel, in appearance and effect similar to the so called French *cloisonnés* but purer and more finished and more delicately ornamented. On the whole they may be pointed out as a great success, and it is to be hoped that this advance of the Berlin goldsmiths may serve as an encouragement, and lead them to enliven their works, many of which are excellent from a plastic point of view, with colored enamel.

(The conclusion in our next.)

## SPECIMENS OF ORNAMENTATION.



No. 1.

No. 1. Modern. Frieze Ornament.